

Message Text

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SUBJ: ACHE-GUAYAKI INDIANS

REF: A) STATE 17919; B) ASUNCION A-93, OCTOBER 5, 1976

1. IN RESPONSE TO REFTTEL, THE EMBASSY PROVIDES FOLLOWING UPDATE ON SITUATION OF ACHE-GUAYAKI INDIANS IN PARAGUAY. THE ESTIMATED STRENGTH OF THIS TRIBE IS NOW 600-800. ABOUT HALF ARE LIVING IN FOUR SETTLEMENTS, ALL PRIVATELY RUN, WHERE THEY ARE MAKING A TRANSITION FROM HUNTING TO A SETTLED, FARMING LIFE. THE REST ARE SCATTERED IN HEAVILY FORESTED AREAS NEAR THE BRAZILIAN BORDER, PURSUING THEIR TRADITIONAL EXISTENCE AS NOMADIC HUNTERS. THIS TRIBE IS BUT A SMALL FRACTION OF THE ESTIMATED 50,000-100,000 UN-ASSIMILATED INDIANS IN PARAGUAY. IN SPITE OF THEIR SMALL NUMBERS, THE PARAGUAYAN GOVERNMENT, IF ANYTHING, HAS BEEN SOLICITIOUS OF THEIR WELFARE AS THE RESULT OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY (DATING FROM THE MUNZEL REPORT OF 1972, NOW BADLY OUT-OF-DATE).

2. THE SITUATION OF THE ACHE-GUAYAKI INDIANS HAS NOT CHANGED APPRECIABLY SINCE THE LAST EMBASSY REPORT. (REF B). THE FOLLOWING IS AN UPDATE ON THE LOCATION AND STATUS OF THE MAJOR GROUPS.

A) NATIONAL COLONY FOR THE ACHE GUAYAKI. THE LAND
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OWNERSHIP DISPUTE HAS WORSENERED. THE NEW TRIBES MISSION HAS INFORMED THE GOP THAT IT MAY MOVE THE COLONY TO ANOTHER LOCATION OR PURCHASE A MUCH SMALLER TRACT AT THE PRESENT SITE IF THE QUESTION IS NOT RESOLVED. WE UNDERSTAND THIS QUESTION IS NOW UNDER HIGH LEVEL CONSIDERATION BUT NO DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED.

B) ALTO PARANA. ABOUT 130 ACHE ARE LIVING ON 25

HECTARES OF LAND OWNED BY A PRIVATE FIRM. THE SETTLEMENT IS ADMINISTERED BY A BRAZILIAN CATHOLIC PRIEST ASSISTED BY A PEACE CORP VOLUNTEER. THE PEACE CORPS HAS UNDER CONSIDERATION A FORMAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR THESE INDIANS. IN ADDITION TO THE ACHE AT THE SETTLEMENT, THERE MAY BE ANOTHER 60 TO 100 ACHE AT SCATTERED FARMS AND RANCHES IN THE NORTHERN PORTION OF THE DEPARTMENT.

C) DEPARTMENT OF CANENDIYU. THREE GROUPS OF ABOUT 30 INDIANS EACH ARE LIVING IN THE JUNGLE IN THIS DEPARTMENT, ONE OF THE MOST PRIMITIVE AND INACCESSIBLE OF PARAGUAY. UNLIKE OTHER ACHE, THESE GROUPS HAVE AVOIDED ALL CONTACT WITH PARAGUAYAN SOCIETY AND HAVE SHUNNED ATTEMPTS TO GET THEM INTO SETTLEMENTS.

D) ITAPUA-CAAZAPA-ALTO PARANA. ABOUT 30 ACHE ARE LIVING IN A SETTLEMENT RUN BY A FORMER AMERICAN MISSIONARY NEAR THE JUNCTURE OF THE THREE DEPARTMENTS. ANOTHER 30 ARE REPORTED LIVING IN THE JUNGLE NEARBY BUT HAVE NOT YET JOINED THE SETTLEMENT.

E) SAN JUAN NEPOMUCENO. SOME 20-60 ACHE ARE REPORTEDLY LIVING ON THE RANCH OF JESUS MANUEL PEREIRA, THE FORMER ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NATIONAL COLONY. REPORTS OF THEIR TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF PEREIRA VARY WIDELY. THE GROUP CONSISTS OF A FOLLOWING HE BUILT UP IN HIS YEARS AT THE NATIONAL COLONY; WHEN HE ESTABLISHED THE RANCH A YEAR AGO, ABOUT 15 FAMILIES LEFT THE NATIONAL COLONY TO JOIN HIM. WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT LACK OF FOOD AND WORK AT PEREIRA'S RANCH HAVE LED EIGHT OF THESE FAMILIES TO RETURN TO THE NATIONAL COLONY, WITH THE REMAINING SEVEN FAMILIES TO FOLLOW IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

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3. AS IN THE PAST, EMBASSY INVESTIGATIONS USING A VARIETY OF SOURCES HAVE FAILED TO TURN UP ANY EVIDENCE OF GENOCIDE. (SEE REF B). VIOLENCE AND DISEASE UNDOUBTEDLY ARE TAKING THEIR TOLL ON THE ACHE GUAYAKI, WHOSE POPULATION IS SLOWLY DECLINING, BUT THE GOP HAS INTERVENED ON BEHALF OF THE INDIANS IN DISPUTES WITH PRIVATE CITIZENS AND IS COOPERATING AS BEST IT CAN WITH THE PRIVATE AGENCIES WORKING WITH THE ACHE. IN ANTICIPATION THAT THE STATUS OF THE HANDFUL OF INDIANS AT THE REMOTE PEREIRA RANCH MAY BE DISCUSSED IN ARENS' BOOK, EMBASSY OFFICERS HOPE TO VISIT THE LOCATION NEXT WEEK, WEATHER PERMITTING. REPORT WILL FOLLOW. (FYI. EXCEPT FOR MUNZEL AND LEWIS, NEITHER WE NOR OTHERS HEREWHO DEAL WITH THE ACHE QUESTION ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE OTHER CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ARENS' BOOK AS LISTED IN REFTEL). EMBASSY LOOKS FORWARD TO RECEIVING COPY OF THE BOOK AND WILL THEN COMMENT IN DETAIL ON ITS SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS.

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